

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT—JOY

NO. 1582

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is joy.”
Galatians 5:22.*

OBSERVE, “The fruit of the Spirit,” for the product of the Spirit of God is one. As some fruits are easily divisible into several parts, so you perceive that the fruit of the Spirit, though it is but one, is threefold, no, it makes three times three—“love, joy, peace; long-suffering, gentleness, goodness; faith, meekness, temperance”—all one! Perhaps “love” is put first not only because it is a right royal virtue, nearest akin to the divine perfection, but because it is a comprehensive grace and contains all the others. All the commandments are fulfilled in one word and that word is “love.” And all the fruits of the Spirit are contained in that one most sweet, most blessed, most heavenly, most God-like grace of love. See that you abound in love to the great Father and all His family, for if you fail in the first point, how can you succeed in the second? Above all things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness!

As for joy, if it is not the first product of the Spirit of God, it is next to the first, and we may be sure that the order in which it is placed by the inspired apostle is meant to be instructive. The fruit of the Spirit is love, first, as comprehensive of the rest—then joy rising out of it. It is remarkable that joy should take so eminent a place! It attains unto the first three and is but one place lower than the first. Look at it in its high position and if you have missed it, or if you have depreciated it, revise your judgment and endeavor with all your heart to attain to it, for depend upon it—this fruit of the Spirit is of the utmost value!

This morning, as I can only speak upon one theme, I leave love for another occasion and treat only of joy. May its divine author, the Holy Spirit, teach us how to speak of it to our profit and His glory! It is quite true that the Spirit of God produces sorrow, for one of His first effects upon the soul is holy *grief*. He enlightens us as to our lost condition, convicting us of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. And the first result upon our heart is astonishment and lamentation. Even when we look to Christ, by the work of the Spirit one of the first fruits is sorrow—“They shall look on Him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him, and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”

But this sorrow is not the ultimate objective of the Spirit's work—it is a means to an end. Even as the travail of the mother leads up to the joy of birth, so do the pangs of repentance lead up to the joy of pardon and acceptance. The sorrow is, to use a Scriptural figure, the blade, but the full corn in the ear is joy. Sorrow helps the fruit on, but the fruit, itself, is joy. The tears of godly grief for sin are all meant to sparkle into the diamonds of joy in pardoning love. This teaches us, then, that we are not to look upon bondage as being the objective of the work of the Spirit of God, or the design of the Lord in a work of grace. Many are under bondage to the law—they attempt to keep the commands of God—not out of love, but from slavish fear. They dread the lash of punishment and tremble like slaves. But to believers it is said, “You are not under the law, but under grace” and, “You have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

To be in bondage under the law, to be afraid of being cast away by God and visited with destruction on account of sin after we have trusted in Jesus—this is *not* the work of the Spirit of God in believers, but the black offspring of unbelief or ignorance of the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Neither is a painful dread or a servile terror a fruit of the Spirit. Many worship the Lord Jesus, Himself, at a distance—they know not that believers are “a people *near* unto Him.” They are afraid of God and they never delight in Him. They attend to worship, not because they rejoice in it, but because they think it must be done. Their secret feeling is—“What a weariness it is,” but necessity compels. They know nothing of a child's joy in sure and full forgiveness, spoken by the Father's own lips as He pressed them to His bosom.

His kiss was never warm upon their cheek. The ring was never on their finger, nor the best robe upon their shoulders. The music and the dancing of the joyous family who are in harmony with the father's joy over the lost son have never charmed their ears. They are still under dread, which is the fruit of *superstition* rather than "the fruit of the Spirit." Many things they do and suffer and all in vain—if the Son did but make them free, they would be free, indeed! I know some whom I am very far from despising, but whom, on the contrary, I greatly value, whose religion, sincere as I know it is, is sadly tinged with gloomy colors. They are afraid of assurance, for they dread presumption! They dare not speak of their own salvation with the certainty with which the Bible saints were known to speak of it—they always say, "I hope," and, "I trust."

They would seem to be total abstainers from joy! They are suspicious of it lest it should be carnal excitement or visionary hope. They hang their heads like bulrushes and go mourning all their days as if the religion of Christ knew no higher festival than a funeral and all its robes were the garments of despair! Brothers and sisters, despondency is *not* the fruit of the Spirit! Make no mistake, depression is frequently the fruit of indigestion, or of satanic temptation, or of unbelief, or of some harbored sin, but, "the fruit of the Spirit is joy." Constantly looking within your own self instead of looking alone to Christ is enough to breed misery in any heart.

I have also known gloomy expressions to be the fruit of affectation, the fruit of the unwise imitation of some undoubtedly good person who was of a downcast spirit. Some of the best of men have had a melancholy turn, but they would have been better men if this had been overcome. Imitate their many *virtues*—but take the pot of ointment and pick out the dead flies. O my brethren, look well to it that you bring forth the genuine, holy, sacred, delicious fruit of the Spirit which, in one of its forms, is "joy." Do not covet the counterfeit of earthly joy, but seek to the good Spirit to bear the true fruit in you.

I. In speaking upon this joy I shall notice, first, the fact that IT IS BROUGHT FORTH. Brothers and sisters, the Spirit of God is not barren! If He is in you, He must and will inevitably produce His own legitimate fruit—and "the fruit of the Spirit is joy." We know this to be a fact because we, ourselves, are witnesses of it. Joy is our portion and we are cheered and comforted in the Savior. "What?" you ask, "are we not depressed and sorrowful at times?" Yea, verily, and yet what Christian man or woman among us would make an exchange with the happiest of all worldlings? Your lot is somewhat hard, my brother, and sometimes your spirit sinks within you. But do you not count yourself to be, even at your worst, happier than the worldling at his best? Come, would you not take your poverty, even with your mourning, rather than accept his wealth with all his hilarity and give up your hope in God?

I am persuaded you would—you would not change your blest estate for a monarch's crown! Well, then, that which you would not change is a good thing and full of joy to your heart. Brothers and sisters, we experience extraordinary joys at times. Some are of an equable temperament and they are almost to be envied, for a stream of gentle joy always glides through their spirit. Others of us are of a more excitable character and, consequently, we fall very flat at times. Yes, but then we have our high days and holidays and mounting times—and then we outsoar the wings of eagles! Heaven itself can hardly know more ecstatic joy than we have occasionally felt! We shall be vessels of greater capacity in heaven, but even here we are, at times, full to the brim with joy—I mean the same joy which makes heaven so glad.

At times God is pleased to inundate the spirit with a flood of joy and we are witnesses that, "happy is the people whose God is the Lord." We do not dance before the ark every day, but when we do, our joy is such as no worldling can understand—it is far above and out of his sight. Besides our own witness, the whole history of the church goes to show that God's people are a joyful people. I am sure that if in reading the history of the first Christian centuries you are asked to point out the men to be envied for their joy, you would point to the believers in Jesus. There is a room in Rome which is filled with the busts of the emperors. I have looked at their heads—they look like a collection of prizefighters and murderers—and I could scarcely discover on any countenance a trace of joy.

Brutal passions and cruel thoughts deprived the lords of Rome of all chance of joy. There were honorable exceptions to their rule, but taking them all round you would look in vain for moral excellence among the Caesars. And lacking this thing of beauty, they missed that which is a joy. Turn, now, to the poor, hunted Christians and read the inscriptions left by them in the catacombs! They are so calm and peaceful that you say instinctively—a joyous people were known to gather here! Those who have been most eminent in service and in suffering for Christ's sake have been of a triumphant spirit, dauntless be-

cause supported by an inner joy! Their calm courage made them the wonder of the age. The true Christian is a different type of manhood from the self-indulgent tyrant. There is almost as much advance from the coarseness of vice to holiness as there is from the chimpanzee to the man!

I do not know how much Tiberius and Caligula and Nero used to sing. Happy men they certainly were not. I can hardly imagine them singing except at their drunken orgies and then in the same tone as tigers growl! But I do know that Paul and Silas sang praises unto God with their feet in the stocks and the prisoners heard them! And I know, also, that this was the mark of the Christians of the first age, that, when they assembled on the Lord's Day, it was not to groan but to sing praises to the name of one Christos, whom they worshipped as God. High joys were common, then, when the Bridegroom comforted His bride in the dens and caves of the earth. Those pioneers of our holy faith were destitute, afflicted, tormented—yet were they men of whom the world was not worthy—and men who counted it all joy to suffer persecution for Christ's sake.

Now, if in the very worst times God's people have been a happy people, I am sure they are so now. I would appeal to the biographies of men of our own day and challenge any question as to the statement that their lives have been among the most desirable of human existences for they possessed a joy which cheered their sorrows, blessed their labors, sweetened their trials and sustained them in the hour of death. With some Christians, this fruit of the Spirit is perpetual, or almost so. I do not doubt that many walk with God as Enoch did throughout the whole day of their life, always peaceful and joyful in the Lord. I have met with some dear brothers and sisters of that kind, whose breath has been praise, whose life has been song! How I envy them and chide my own heart that I cannot always abide in their choice condition! It is to be accomplished and we will press forward till we are "always rejoicing."

But with others, joy is *not* constant and yet it is frequent. David had his mourning times when tears were his meat, day and night, and yet God was his exceeding joy. How thankful we ought to be for the portrait of David's inner self which is presented to us in the Book of Psalms. With all his grief, what joys he had! David was, on the whole, a joyous man. His Book of Psalms has in it lyrics of delight—the most glad hymns that ever leaped from human tongues! David is, I believe, the type of a great majority of the people of God who, if not, "always rejoicing," are yet often so. Please remember that the utmost fullness of joy can hardly be enjoyed always in this mortal life. I believe that the human frame is not, in this world, capable of perpetual ecstasy.

Look at the sun, but look not too long lest you are blinded by excessive light. Taste of honey, but eat not much of it or it will no longer please the palate. Let your ears be charmed with the Hallelujah chorus, but do not *dream* that you could endure its harmonies all the hours of the day—before long you would cry out for eloquent pauses and sweet reliefs of silence! Too much, even, of delight will weary our feeble hearts and we shall need to come down from the mountain. Our bodies require a portion of sleep and that which is inevitable to the flesh has its likeness in the spirit—it must be quiet and still. I believe it is inevitable, also, more or less, that the loftiest joy should be balanced by a sinking of heart. I do not say that depression is certain to follow delight, but usually some kind of faintness comes over the finite spirit after it has been lifted up into communion with the infinite.

Do not, therefore, set too much store by your own *feelings* as evidences of divine grace. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy," but you may not, at this moment, be *conscious* of joy. Trees are not always bearing fruit and yet "their substance is in them when they lose their leaves." Some young people say, "Oh, we know we are saved because we are so happy." It is by no means sure evidence, for joy may be carnal, unfounded, and unspiritual. Certain Christians are afraid that they cannot be in a saved state because they are *not* joyous, but we are saved by *faith* and not by joy! I was struck with the remark of Ebenezer Erskine when he was dying and someone said to him, "I hope you have, now and then, a blink to bear up your spirit under affliction." He promptly replied, "I know more of words than of blinks," that is to say he had rather trust a promise of God than his own glimpses of heaven! And so would I.

The Word of God is a more sure testimony to the soul than all the raptures a man can feel! I would sooner walk in the dark and hold hard to a promise of my God than trust in the light of the brightest day that ever dawned! Precious as the fruit is, do not put the fruit where the root should be. Please remember that joy is not the root of grace in the soul—it is the *fruit* and must not be put out of its proper position. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy" and it is brought forth in believers, but not alike in all. But to all believers there is a measure of joy.

II. Secondly, THIS JOY IS OF A SINGULAR CHARACTER. It is singular for this reason that it often ripens under the most remarkable circumstances. As I have already said, the highest joy of Christians has often been experienced in their times of greatest distress. Tried believers have been happy when smarting under pain, or wasting away with disease. Sick beds have been thrones to many saints—they have almost feared to come out of the furnace because the presence of the Lord in the midst of the fire has made it none other than the gate of heaven to their souls! Saints in poverty have been made exceedingly rich and when they have eaten a dry crust they have found a flavor in it which they never discovered in the dainties of their abundance.

Many children of God, even when driven away from the outward means of grace, have, nevertheless, enjoyed such visits of God, such inlets of divine love that they have wondered from where such joy could come! In the wilderness, waters leap forth as do streams in the desert. Believers are not dependent upon *circumstances*. Their joy comes not from what they *have*, but from what they *are*—not from *where* they are, but from *whose* they are—not from what they enjoy, but from that which was suffered for them by their Lord. It is a singular joy, then, because it often buds, blossoms and ripens in winter time and when the fig tree does not blossom and there is no herd in the stall. God's Habakkuks rejoice in the God of their salvation!

It is a singular joy, too, because it is quite consistent with spiritual conflict. He that is an heir of heaven may cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And yet, before the sigh is over, he may sing, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing! Struggling, yet always victorious! Cast down, but not destroyed! Persecuted, but not forsaken! Troubled and yet, all the while triumphant! Such is the mingled experience of the saints. Oh, this is the wondrous grace, this joy which can live side by side with conflict of the sorest sort. This joy is special because at times it is altogether beyond description. One who was of a sober disposition called it "joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Full of glory!"

That is a wonderful expression! A drop of glory is sweet, but, oh, to taste a joy that is *full* of glory—is that possible here? Yes and some of us bear witness that it is so—we have felt joy that we dare not tell and could not tell if we dared—men would turn and tear us apart, condemning us as utterly fanatical or out of our minds if we were to cast these pearls before them! But, oh, if they could guess what delicious drafts are held within the jeweled chalice of divine communion with our Master, they would be ready to wade through hell, itself, to drink from them! Our joy is altogether unspeakable joy at times.

One more singularity there is in it, for it is all the while solid, thoughtful, rational joy. The joy of the ungodly is like the crackling of thorns under a pot—noisy and flashy—but soon over. The ungodly man feels merry, but really, if you come to look into his mirth, there is nothing in it but flame without fuel, sparkle without solidity. But the Christian's joy is such that he has as much reason for it as if it were a deduction from mathematics. He has as just a right to be joyful as he has to eat his own bread! He is certain of his pardon, for God has told him that a believer in Christ is not condemned! And he is sure of his acceptance, for he is justified by faith. He knows that he is secure, for Christ has given him *eternal* life and said that His sheep shall never perish! He is happy, not for causes at which he guesses, but by *infallible* reasons plainly revealed in God's Word! This makes Him joyful in the Lord when others wonder that he is so, for he perceives arguments for happiness which are unknown to the thoughtless crowd.

That word, "joyful," is a very sweet and clear one. "Happiness" is a very dainty word, but yet it is somewhat insecure because it begins with "hap," and seems to depend on a chance which may happen to the soul. We say "happy-go-lucky," and that is very much the world's happiness—it is a kind of thing that may hap and may not hap—but there is no hap in the fruit of the Spirit which is joy! When we are joyful, or full of joy, and that of the best kind, we are favored, indeed! No man takes this joy from us and a stranger meddles not with it—it is a *celestial* fruit and earth cannot produce its like.

III. Thirdly, I would now refresh your memories and by the help of the Spirit of God bring back former joys to you—THIS JOY IS EXPERIENCED BY THE CHRISTIAN UNDER VARIOUS FORMS. Sometimes he experiences it in hearing the Word of God—it is written concerning Samaria there was great joy in that city because Philip went down and preached the gospel to them. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound! However, joy of hearing lies in *believing* what you hear. We get joy and peace in *believing*. When you get a grip of the Word of God—when the glad tidings becomes a

message to your own soul and the Spirit speaks it to your own heart, then you say, “Go on, man of God! Your sermon will not be too long today, for the Lord is laying it home to my soul.”

The reason why people grumble at long sermons is often because they do not feed on them. Very seldom the hungry man murmurs at having too big a meal. It is a delightful thing to hear the Word faithfully preached. Have you not sometimes exclaimed, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings glad tidings”? That is one occasion of joy. But what joy there is, dear Friends, in the salvation of God when we heartily receive it! Oh, how we bless the God of our salvation and how we praise Him that He has saved us from our sins and from the wrath to come by giving us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, by the sacrifice of His dear Son!

Frequently we revel in the privileges of the covenant. The joy of my heart, when I think of the doctrine of election, is quite inexpressible. That hymn which begins—

*“In songs of sublime adoration and praise,
You pilgrims to Zion who press,
Break forth and extol the great ancient of days
His rich and distinguishing grace,”*

is often with me and makes my heart merry. Then the doctrine of redemption, of which I tried to speak last Lord’s Day [*Silver Sockets—Redemption the Foundation*, Volume 27, Sermon #1581] how joyous it is! What bliss to know that the Redeemer lives! “Unto you that believe He is precious” and a fullness of joy flows forth at every remembrance of Him. Then that doctrine of justification is the marrow of joy! Oh, to think that we are *just* in the sight of God through Jesus Christ!

All the doctrines of grace especially that of final perseverance, are joyful truths of God! I declare that if you take final perseverance from me, you have robbed the Bible of one of its crowning attractions! Jesus has not given us a transient salvation, but His salvation shall be forever! I will quote again those matchless words of His—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Honey flows here as in the woods of Jonathan! Put it to your mouth and your eyes shall be enlightened! The joy of God’s people, when they can get half-an-hour alone and sit down and crack a dish of those nuts called the doctrines of grace, is such as philosophical worldlings might well desire! But the *modern gospel* has no such wines on the lees well-refined.

But, brothers and sisters, our most grand joy is in God Himself! Paul says, “And not only so, but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Oh, to think of the great Father! What a melting of spirit comes over the child of God if at midnight he looks up at the stars and considers the heavens and cries, “What is man, that You are mindful of him?” To think that He is not only mindful of us, but that He has taken us to be His sons and daughters! And then to feel the Spirit within our heart crying, “Abba, Father! Abba, Father!” Oh, this is joy in the most profound sense! How sweet to think of Jesus Christ the Son, the glorious incarnate God, the surety, the satisfaction, the representative, the all in all of His people! We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor do we miss the joy of the Spirit when we know that He dwells in us. He sanctifies us, comforts us and guides us in the road to heaven. Oh brothers and sisters, this is a sea of bliss, the infinite deeps of the eternal godhead! Leap from all your miseries into this sea of glory! Plunge into the joy of your Lord! This being so, we have a joy in all God’s ordinances—“with joy do we draw water out of the wells of salvation.” What a joy prayer is—I hope you find it so. The Lord has said, “I will make them joyful in My house of prayer.” And what a joy it is to get answers to our petitions, even as our Lord says, “Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Has not your joy been full till your eyes have been dim with tears and you have not hardly dared to tell how wondrously God has answered you? The mercy seat is lit up with joy.

What a joyous ordinance is that of praise! We come up to the sanctuary and bring our offering to God and present Him our oblation, just as the Jew of old brought his bullock or his lamb—and we joyfully present our gift unto the Most High. Then we begin to sing His praises and our joy is the chief musician upon our stringed instruments. How our spirits rise as we adore the Lord! The amount of happiness felt in this tabernacle when we have been singing unto the Lord, can never be measured! For my own part, I have seemed to stand just outside the wall of the New Jerusalem joining in the hymns which are sung within the gates of the eternal city! One joy note has helped another and the volume of sound has affected every part of our being and stirred us up to vehemence of joy!

And oh, what joy there is in coming to the Lord's Table! May we experience it tonight, as we have often done before. The Lord is known to us in the breaking of bread and that knowledge is blissful. But I have scarcely begun the list, for we have a great joy in the salvation of other people! Perhaps one of the choicest delights we know is when we partake in the joy of the Good Shepherd over His lost sheep when He calls us together, for we, also, are His friends and His neighbors. And He bids us rejoice that He has found the sheep which was lost! Especially do we joy and rejoice if the poor wanderer has been brought back by our means. The jewels of an emperor are *nothing* compared with the riches we possess in winning a soul for Christ! "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." The joy of harvest is great, the joy of the man who comes again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Do you know this joy, brothers and sisters? If you do not, awaken yourselves and may this sweet fruit of the Spirit yet be yours. Oh, the joy of seeing Christ exalted! John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He called himself the Bridegroom's friend, and rejoiced greatly in the Bridegroom's joy. We can sympathize with him when we can bring about a marriage between Christ and any poor soul—and help to put the ring on the finger. The joy we feel is of the purest and loveliest order, for it is unselfish and refined. Let Jesus be exalted and we ask no more! If He reigns, we reign! If He is lifted up, our hearts are more than satisfied! Brethren, if we ever become perfect in heart, we shall joy in all the divine will, whatever it may bring us.

I am trying, if I can, to find a joy in rheumatism, but I cannot get up to it yet. I have found a joy when it is over—I can reach *that* length—and I can and do bless God for any good result that may come of it. But when the pain is on me, it is difficult to be joyous about it, and so I conclude that my sanctification is incomplete and my conformity to the divine will is sadly imperfect. Oh, the splendor of God's will! If a man were as he ought to be, God's will would charm him, and he would not wish for the smallest change in it! Poverty, sickness, bereavement, death—all are to be rejoiced in when our will is merged in the will of God!

What? Would you alter God's infinitely wise appointment? Would you wish to change the purpose of unerring love? Then you are not wholly reconciled to God, for when the head gets quite right the heart climbs where Paul was when he said, "We glory in tribulations, also, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience." It needs a Samson to kill the lion of affliction and you cannot get honey out of it until it is conquered. But we might all be Samsons if we would but lay hold on the strength of God by faith! Dear brothers and sisters, the list of joys which I am even now only *commencing*, contains the joy of an easy conscience, the joy of feeling you have done right before God, the joy of knowing that your objective, though misunderstood and misrepresented, was God's glory! This is a jewel to wear on one's breast—a quiet conscience.

Then there is the joy of communion with Christ, the joy of fellowship with His saints, the joy of drinking deep into Christ's spirit of self-sacrifice. There, too, is the joy of expecting His glorious Advent when He and His saints shall reign upon the earth, and the joy of being with Him forever! The joy of heaven and the joy of which we have been singing just now; these joys are countless! But I will pause here and leave you to make a fuller catalog when you are at home. May the Holy Spirit not only refresh your memories concerning old joys, but bring forth out of His treasury new delights that your joy may be full!

IV. I must notice, in the fourth place, that **THIS FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT MAY BE CHECKED IN ITS GROWTH.** Some of you may have muttered while I have been speaking of this joy, "I do not know much about it." Perhaps not, friend—shall I tell you why? Some people are too full of the joy of the *world*, the joy of getting on in business, the joy of a large family, the joy of health, the joy of wealth, the joy of human love, or the joy which comes of the pride of life. These joys may be your *idols* and you *know* the joy of the Lord will not stand side by side with an idolatrous delight in the things of this world! See to that. Dagon must fall if the ark of the Lord is present—the world must lose its charms if you are to joy in Christ Jesus.

Our joy is sadly diminished by our unbelief. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. Ignorance will do the same to a very large extent. Many a Christian has a thousand reasons for joy which he knows nothing of. Study the Word and ask for the teaching of the Spirit of God that you may understand it and so shall you discover wells of delight! Joy is diminished, also, by walking at a distance from God. If you get away from the fire, you will grow cold—the warmest place is right in front of it and the

warmest place for a believing heart is close to Christ in daily fellowship with Him. It may be that indulged in sin is spoiling our joy. “This little hand of mine,” as Mr. Whitefield once said, “can cover up the sun as far as my eyes are concerned.”

You have only to lift a naughty, rebellious hand and you can shut out the light of God, Himself—any known sin will do it. Trifling with sin will prove a killjoy to the heart. I believe that many lose the joy of the Lord because they do not put it in the right place. See where it lives. Look at my text—“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace.” There joy stands in the center—“love” is on one side and “peace” on the other! Find a man who never loved anybody and you have found a joyless man. This man’s religion begins and ends with looking to his own safety. The only point he longs to know is—is *he* saved? He never knows joy; poor creature, how can he? As to peace, where is it? He has none because wherever he goes he growls, grumbles, snarls and barks at everybody. There is no peace where he is! He is always quarrelling and then he says, “I have little joy.”

He does not live in the right house for joy! Joy dwells at No. 2. “Love” is No. 1—“joy” is No. 2—“Peace” is No. 3 and if you pull down either of the houses on the side, No. 2, in the middle, will tumble down! Joy is the center of a triplet and you must have it so or not at all—“love, joy, peace.” Thus I have shown how the growth of joy can be checked. I pray you do not allow such an evil thing to be worked in *your* heart.

V. But, lastly, IT OUGHT TO BE CAREFULLY CULTIVATED. There is an obligation upon a Christian to be happy. Let me say it again—there is a responsibility laid upon a Christian to be cheerful! It is not merely an invitation, but it is a *command*—“Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous.” “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.” Gloomy Christians who do not resist despondency and strive against it, but who go about as if midnight had taken up its abode in their eyes and an everlasting frost had settled on their souls are not obeying the commands of God! The command to rejoice is as undoubted a precept of God as to love the Lord with all your heart. The vows of God are upon you, O believer, and they bind you to be joyful!

In this joyfulness you shall find many great advantages. First, it is a great advantage, in itself, to be happy. Who would not rejoice if he could? Who would not rejoice when God commands him? Rejoicing will nerve you for life’s duties. “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” A man who goes about Christ’s work in an unwilling, miserable spirit will do it badly and feebly. He may do it earnestly, but there will be no life or energy about him. Hear how the sailors, when they pull the rope, will shout and sing and work all the better for their cheery notes! I do not believe our soldiers would march to battle with half their present courage if they tramped along in silence. Beat the drums! Let the trumpet sound forth its martial note! Every man is eager for the fray while soul-stirring music excites him. Let your heart make music unto God and you will fight valiantly for the kingdom of your Lord.

Holy joy will also be a great preventive. The man who feels the joy of the Lord will not covet worldly joy. He will not be tempted to make a God of his possessions or of his talents, or of anything else. He will say, “I have joy in God. These things I am very thankful for, but they are not my joy.” He will not crave the aesthetic in worship, for his joy will be in God and His truth—not in external forms. Some people’s idea of joy in religion lies in fine singing, charming music, pretty dresses, splendid architecture, or showy eloquence. They need this because they do not know the secret joy of the Lord, for when *that* holy passion reigns within, you may sit inside four whitewashed walls and not hear a soul speak for a whole hour and a half and yet you may have as intense a joy as if you listened to the most earnest oratory or the sweetest song!—

*“Joy in God is suitable to our condition!
Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days?”*

What are we doing now, some of us? We have been hanging our harps on the willows—let us take them down—the willow limbs will bend! Thank God we did not break the harps, though we did hang them there. Let us get into our right position—children of the happy God should, themselves, be happy. Joy is certainly the best preparation for the future. We are going where, if we learn to groan ever so deeply, our education will be lost, for melancholy utterances are unknown up there! We are going where, if we learn to sing with sacred joy, our education will be useful, for the first thing we shall hear

when we get into heaven will undoubtedly be, “Hallelujah to God and the Lamb!” And if we have been joyful on earth we shall say, “Ah, I am at home here!”

To enter heaven with a joyful soul is only to rise from downstairs to the upper chamber where the music knows no discord. It is the same song in both places, “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood.” Joy in the Lord will be very helpful to you as to usefulness. I am sure a Christian man’s usefulness is abridged by dreariness of spirit. What nice Sunday school teachers some Christians I know of would make! “Come you children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the miseries of religion!” And the dear brother begins by telling the children about the Slough of Despond, Giant Despair and the Valley of the Shadow of Death! He wonders, when he gets home, that the dear children are not attracted to the ways of godliness! Are they likely to be? A member of a church who has no joy of the Lord is little likely to encourage or influence others—they edge away from him.

Even those who try to comfort him find it is to no purpose and so they give him a wide berth. You hear him stand up to address an assembly of believers, to tell his experience, and after a very little of it you feel you have had enough. Those who drink wine will tell you that half a dozen drops of vinegar are more than they need in a glass of wine and those who carry the cruet about wherever they go are not choice company! I do not find fault with gloomy souls, but they might be more useful if they could live more in the sunlight! The joy of the Lord is the most injurious to Satan’s empire of anything. I am of the same mind as Luther, who, when he heard any very bad news, used to say, “Come, let us sing a Psalm and spite the devil.”

There is nothing like it! Whenever anything happens that is rough and ugly and seems to injure the kingdom of Christ, say to yourself, “bless the Lord, glory be to His name.” If the Lord has been dishonored by the falling away of a false professor, or the failure of the ministry in any place, let us give Him all the more honor, ourselves, and in some measure make up for all that has happened amiss. And, lastly, holy joy is very pleasing to God. God delights in the joy of His creatures. He made them to be happy! His first and original design in the creation of all beings is His own glory in their happiness. When His people rejoice He rejoices.

Some of you spent Christmas day in the bosom of your families. Possibly you have a large family—10 or 12 were at home on that day, with a grandchild or two. I will tell you what was your greatest joy on that day—it was to see the happiness of your children and to mark how they enjoyed what you had provided for them. They are only little children, some of them, creeping about on the floor, but they pleased you because they were so pleased themselves! The joy of a little child delights your heart to hear it, for it gives us joy to behold joy in those we love. Suppose your sons and daughters had all come marching in on Christmas day in a very gloomy state of mind—cold, loveless, joyless—suppose that they did not enjoy anything, but grumbled at you and at one another? You would be quite sad and wish the day to be soon over and never come again for the next seven years!

Thus in a figure we see that our heavenly Father delights in the delight of His children and is glad to see them grateful and happy and acting as children should do towards such a parent! Now, brothers and sisters, rise as one man and sing—

*“Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry!
We’re marching thro’
Immanuel’s ground
To fairer worlds on high.”*

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